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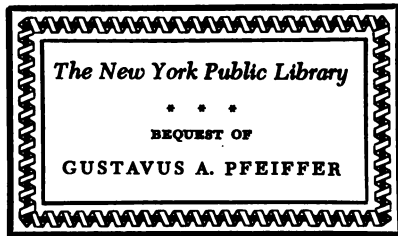
# A Christmas Masque



*LOUIS TYLOR*

LONDON  
T. FISHER UNWIN

24







**CHES,**  
**A CHRISTMAS MASQUE**



# Chess

## A Christmas Masque

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By

LOUIS TYLOR

---

*Do we move ourselves, or are moved by an unseen hand at a game  
That pushes us off from the board, and others ever succeed?*

TENNYSON.

---



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LONDON

*T. FISHER UNWIN*

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*Non creda monna Berta, e ser Mastino  
Per vedere un furare, altro offerere,  
Vedergli dentro al consiglio divino:  
Chè quel può surger, e quel può cadere.*

*Dante: Paradiso xiii. 139.*



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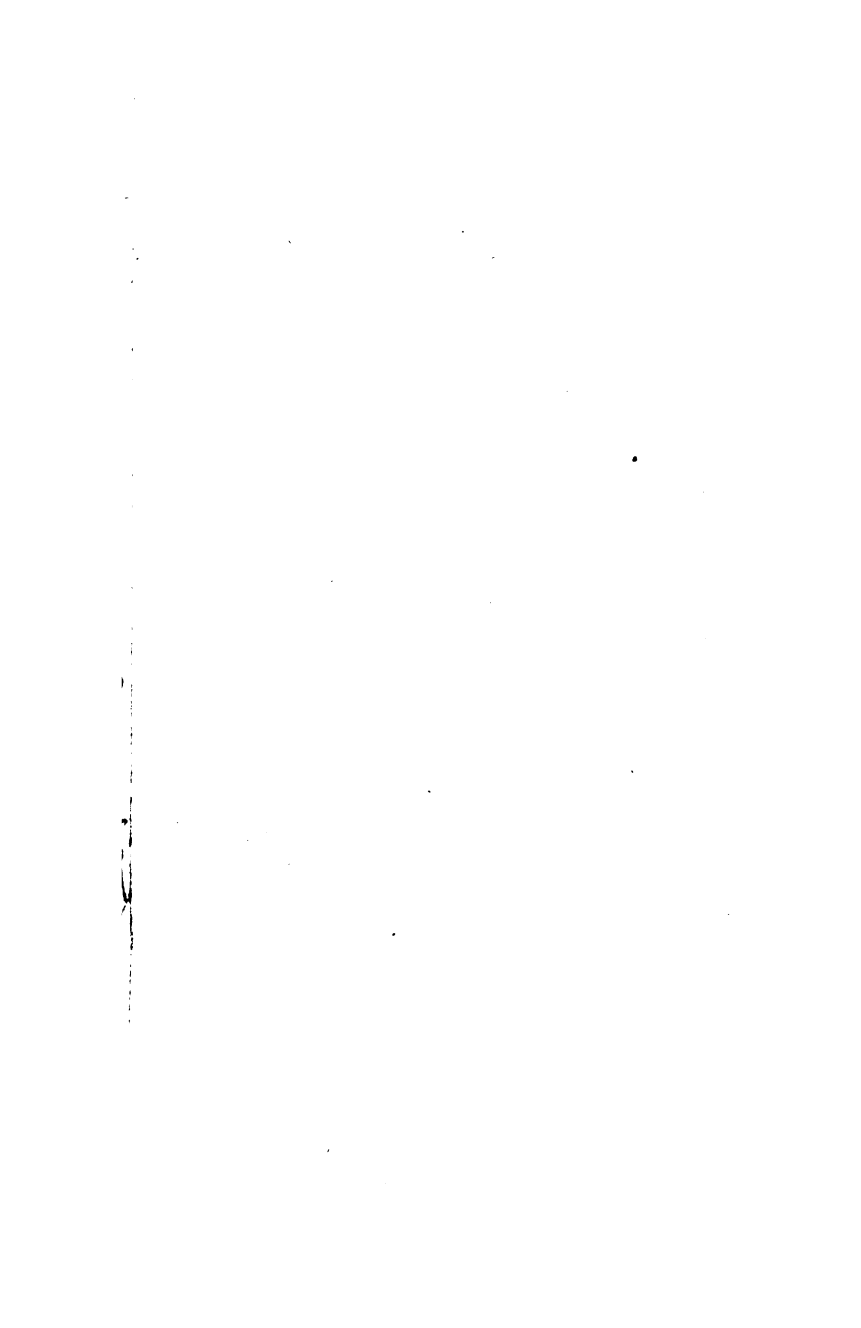
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PROLOGUE TO THE READER FROM THE AUTHOR.

*I know not if 'tis true; but old folks say,  
That he who spends the eve of Christmas Day  
Alone, and falls asleep 'twixt curfew time  
And twelve, and wakes before the midnight chime,  
Finds all things that have known the sway of man  
Alive, and eager to unroll the plan  
Of mortal destiny. Their form he sees,  
Their voice he hears as human: should he please  
To question them, they speak as those who share  
Man's good and evil Fortune. If you care  
To think what might befall on such an eve  
So spent, peruse this booklet and believe  
Though Fancy coloured, from the life I drew:  
Grant it a welcome Christmas gift to you.*



## THE CHIMES.

### FIRST QUARTER.

**P**RAISE the Lord with changeful voices,  
Loud and clear when life rejoices,  
Low and sweet for death and weeping:  
Praise Him ere the hour of sleeping.  
*Rest is praise: Man trusts God's keeping.*

### SECOND QUARTER.

Day by day, before the breaking,  
Busy brains betimes are waking,  
Eager hands are broadcast sowing;  
What shall prosper all unknowing.  
*Failing oft, at last succeeding,*  
*Work is praise: Man owns God's leading.*

### THIRD QUARTER.

Rises from the troubled city  
Discord, mingled shame and pity;  
Shame for rest that bears no burden,  
Grief for toil that gains no guerdon.  
*Strife is praise: Man feels God's guiding*  
*Towards a city whose abiding*  
*Knows not rich from poor dividing.*

## FOURTH QUARTER.

Hark ! the happy Christmas greeting,  
Sweeter yet for each repeating ;  
Making holy day of pleasure,  
Filling Earth to Heaven's measure.  
*When for joy in rest from labour  
Man seeks solace for his neighbour ;  
When his work the worker raises,  
Peace on Earth shall crown our praises.*

CLOCK STRIKES NINE.

## ERIC'S STUDY.

ERIC *asleep before a chess-table on which he has been following a Match-game.*

ERIC (*waking*).

A PLEASANT dream. Methought the smooth square  
board

Grew rugged as the chequered field of life ;  
My chessmen took a human shape and moved,  
The White with purpose good, the Black with ill.  
Behind the hosts in serried ranks arrayed  
The Powers of Light and Darkness held their place ;  
And I, half-pleased, half-puzzled, watched the game.  
Was never dream so like to waking—Nay !  
Not “was,” but “is,” for see ! the living lines  
Meet and are broken : now the tide of war  
Forms islets, where the vassals cluster round  
Baron, or prelate, or castellan-bold.  
No longer easy to discern the right,  
As when the armies front to front opposed

Or judge the issue, when the scope and scheme  
Are lost in artful feint and counterfeit.  
Here, where a moment Fortune seemed to smile,  
The splintered lance and empty saddle tell  
Of fallen valour ; yet the fall of one,  
Perchance may win advantage ground for all.  
The clang of battle rises ; now it falls,  
The day is lost and won, and friends and foes,  
Victors and vanquished doff their warlike gear :  
And hark ! the trumpet-call gives place to song.

---

CHORUS OF CHESSMEN.

PIECES.

When the play is over, and the match is won,  
Times of joyous contest ended, joyous rest begun ;  
Then the players, foes no longer, only rival friends,  
Drink a parting health together ; so the evening ends  
When the play is over.

PAWNS.

When the work is over, and the reckoning cast  
Of the loss and gain the Future herits from the Past ;  
Then the struggle recommences, all its hungry need  
Written in the father's life-blood for the child to read  
When the work is over.

CAROLLERS (*without*).

When the life is over, with its good and ill  
Fixed for ever, clean or unclean, just or unjust still ;  
Then the cause of right shall triumph, wrong be put to  
scorn,  
And our King shall come in glory, on that Christmas morn  
When the Life is over.

## ERIC.

A game within a game ; not only Black  
Contends with White, as Evil strives with Good ;  
But lordly Pieces take one view of chess,  
And common Pawns another. So with men,  
No matter though their cause be right or wrong ;  
To those whose lot is easy,—wants forestalled,  
Ills cured or shielded,—though they bear the load,  
They bear it willingly ; and that we know  
Makes all the difference. To those again  
Whose work is forced by stress of daily needs ;  
Their ever-growing wants cause fresh demands  
Till higher culture only makes routine  
For mind and body lower slavery.  
And yet the right *shall* triumph ; step by step  
Our God-claimed parentage asserts itself  
Till habit turns to instinct, making Man  
More human and less natural, and Life  
No longer toil or pastime, but a school  
Of training for a future where the prize  
Is one for conduct. Pity stays the hand  
Uplifted, Chivalry becomes a name

---

For mercy and forbearance, gentle men  
Are gentlemen in deed ; and now the game  
Is not the one we see upon the board :  
Though strong and subtle players bear the palm,  
Though strategy and courage win the crown,  
Not this the battle nor the end of life,  
Not this the victory that heralds peace,  
The Life and Peace that know not War and Death.

## CHORUS OF CHESSMEN.

## STROPHE.

Where is the battle? Flame in the sky,  
On earth, over sea, as the thunder rolls by,  
And Man fiercer than Jove, *aims* his bolts ere they fly :  
There is the battle.

## ANTISTROPHE.

Where is the battle? Warriors bold  
Move at the bidding of counsellors cold ;  
The oars for the young, but the helm for the old :  
There is the battle.

CAROLLERS (*without*).

When the day is over ; and the hire is paid,  
Think ye not your labour worthless, though the yield  
delayed.  
Toil on Earth gives fruit in Heaven, O ye faint and worn  
Who have planted in the vineyard, for the Christmas morn  
When the day is over.

BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP.

'Vineyards and Christmas' seems to me confused ;  
But all your songsters take poetic license :  
And who would look in carols for a nice sense  
Of how the gifts of Nature should be used ?

Of all men living, poets are most hateful ;  
I often thank my stars that I'm no poet.  
Why say, "You need not tell us that—we know it ?"  
You really do not know for what I'm grateful.

Off duty, chess itself becomes a mystery :  
No more we move—we only think and read,  
(The learned praise my treatise on the Creed),  
And this is how we know so much of history.

But poets are like economic cooks ;  
They get ideas so tough that none can chew them,  
And then of these they make a hash and stew them  
Served up with spice for those that read their books.

Poetry is what a homely English writer  
Called dirt : "the right thing, only in the wrong place."  
In simple prose, a castle is a strong place,  
And I, Episcopus ; behold my mitre !

Each has his rank, and knows his proper station ;  
Pawn, Knight or Castle, Bishop, Consort, King :  
Black *versus* White. Our famous contests bring  
Men to look on and learn exercitation.

We move ourselves, and though the King (God bless him !)  
Is somewhat weak, his able Consort leans  
Upon the Church (this ruby was the Queen's),  
And so he sways as we discreetly press him.

But in a mess your poet needs must dish up  
Church, fortress, safeguard, overseer, protection,  
Till I forget my hours for slight refecton,  
And whether I'm a Castle or a Bishop.

And then he rings the philosophic changes  
On "moves and motives," "rules and rulers," till  
Against Authority he sets Free Will,  
And private judgment all our plans deranges.

CAROLLERS (*without*).

When the night is over, and the victor's wreath  
Faded and forgotten, Love shall conquer Death :  
'Tis for gladness, since our Saviour on to earth was born,  
That our evergreens betoken Heaven's Christmas morn  
When the night is over.

## ERIC.

Fit song for Christmastide. My spirit springs  
To meet the thought, as leaps the soldier's heart  
At sound of the old regimental march ;  
Springs to fall back : an hundred times have I,  
An hundred million times have wiser men  
Grappled with this same question : " If the wrong  
Must have an ending, why, in God's great name,  
Had it beginning ? " None can say that wrong  
Exists not, for we feel it in ourselves :  
It matters not by whose defect it comes,  
Another's, or our own ; through sheer mistake,  
Or crime, or simply through an aimless chance :

The trampled wife, the starving man, the child  
Savage or crippled ; failure, death, disgrace,  
In one word, " evil " makes this world a hell,  
Worse if there be no Devil, for the thought  
That God *can* help but does not.

Peace ! no more :

Too loud thy voice, too high thy tone for man,  
Mere potter's clay, complaining of the Hand  
That shapes it. Dolls to dolls ; this quaint device,  
This masque of chessmen, show within a show  
Befits me better than " Prometheus bound."  
I like the comedy so strangely cast,  
Old portraits stepping from their tarnished frames,  
To ancient music setting modern words,  
Duplicius quoting Cobbett. What it means  
I care not ; let it pass for what it *is*.  
I like the vagueness of the atmosphere ;  
Christmas without, and All Fools' Day within ;  
And since at Rome the proper thing to do  
Is as the Romans, so I lend myself  
To this conceit. Methought yon fair-haired Knight  
Played somewhat fiercely with the heavy hilts  
Of sword and dagger while the Churchman sneered.  
Speak out, Sir Baron, if it please thy will ;  
And tell me of some stirring feat of arms,  
What time that cross of thine could scarce be known  
Amidst the deeper red that dyed the ground.

Or stay—

From what the worthy Bishop said,  
I gather that you Chessmen disbelieve  
In men as aught but pupils in your school ;  
And when I think how patiently we pore  
Over each move, that by a single act,—  
One touch, no more,—is settled once for all,  
I grant you reason well : at all events  
You reason well for Chessmen. So my place  
I humbly take as scholar. That which stirred  
Our friend the Bishop was the poet's art  
Transmuting common dross of worldly rank,  
Of worldly motives, strivings for success,  
To precious gold of love and sympathy ;  
And as I said : this change once made, our life  
“ Is not the game we see upon the board.”  
Can'st show, Sir Knight, how love's transforming touch  
Has turned the ill to good ? If such a case  
Thou knowest, speak, and Heaven give us grace.

## WHITE QUEEN'S KNIGHT.

Sir Hildebrand, the good Knight,  
To the Holy Land has gone,  
With a following of the Order  
Of S. Peter and S. John.

But a year and a day has been counted  
Since they crossed the salt sea strand,  
And yet none has brought back tidings  
Of the good Sir Hildebrand.

The Knights have kept their vigil  
Till the dawn of Easter Day,  
As of old the two Apostles  
Stayed apart to watch and pray.

- Now the Order meets in Chapter  
At the summons of the bell ;  
But who gave yon Palmer entrance  
With his staff and cockle-shell ?
-

"Ill news, ill news ! Sir Prior,  
That I bring from Holy Land :  
Stiff and stark lie the good Knights,  
All, save Sir Hildebrand ;

"Him a Soldan holds in durance,  
And by spells of false Mahoun,  
Tortures fell, and pangs of hunger  
Is his spirit broken down.

"He has stooped to beg for mercy,  
And has spit upon the Cross,  
And this Easter-morn the Soldan  
Will bestride him like a horse,

"Ride him thrice around the ramparts  
While the Paynim scoff and jeer  
At the renegade and coward  
Whom ye hold in honour here."

White with horror stands the Prior,  
Flush the Knights with crimson shame,  
Rising from their seats, they clamour  
Vengeance on the traitor's name :

"Cast the coward from amongst us,  
Tear the banner from his stall,  
Blot his name from out our records,  
Rive his scutcheon from the wall."

But the Palmer's tones sonorous  
Rise above the angry roar :  
"Let the Church pronounce his sentence,  
Dooming him for evermore."

Deep acclaims and deeper silence  
Show the Palmer counsels well :  
To the Altar moves the Prior ;  
Calls for candle, book, and bell.

But before the doom is spoken,  
Steppeth forth a stalwart Knight,  
Known to all, of courage proven,  
Bearing scars of many a fight.

Cries : "A boon I crave, Sir Prior ;  
Rough and ready is my way ;  
With my sword, on foot or horseback  
Make I good the words I say.

"Once, alone in press of foemen,  
With my life-blood flowing red,  
Saw I him you call 'a coward,'  
Force his way through quick and dead ;

"And like hammer strokes on anvil  
Rang his blows on helm and shield  
Till he reached me, and together  
Fought we out that bloody field.

---

“ And though all the Palmer sayeth  
Be as true as word Divine,  
No man scathless calls him ‘ coward,’  
Who has risked his life for mine.

“ He who places foul dishonour  
On the good Sir Hildebrand,  
Let him prove it on my body,  
Foot to foot, and hand to hand.

“ And not only for my comrade  
Will I venture life and limb ;  
But S. Peter be my witness  
That I fight this fight for *him*.

“ He who calls the good Knight ‘ faithless,’  
To S. Peter says the word ;  
For 'tis writ in Holy Gospel  
That he thrice denied his Lord.

“ He who calls the good Knight ‘ coward,’  
Let the judge S. Peter be,  
He whose trusted courage failed him  
On the Galilean Sea.

“ Let the Palmer name his witness  
To do battle for his word ;  
Here I stand who say : ‘ he lieth,’  
And maintain it by my sword.”

On his knees down sinks the Prior,  
Falls each Knight on bended knee ;  
Waiting for a sign from Heaven  
On such awful blasphemy.

But no token breaks the silence ;  
And when downcast eyes are raised,  
Lo ! the Palmer's place is empty,  
So that all start up amazed.

All, except the one who kneeleth  
Pale and still as carved in stone :  
One by one each Knight departeth,  
And the Prior is left alone.

BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP.

The moral of this risky tale is twofold.

First—Holy Scripture was compiled in Latin  
For many reasons ; principally, that in  
Cases disparaging the shepherds who fold

The flock, the flock should rest content with bliss  
Of ignorance ; and, second—Church was meant for  
Worship, not talking : Anselm would have sent for  
That Prior and taught him discipline, I wis.

BLACK QUEEN'S KNIGHT.

A sorry ending ; would that I had heard  
That challenge ! Sword to sword, and hand to hand,

*I would have faced the churl who made a mock  
At Church and Chivalry. If this your creed,  
Sir White-cheek, that a coward may escape,  
Because forsooth S. Peter once showed fear,  
Who never was a soldier, or at most  
But half a Knight—the best half——*

BLACK KING'S BISHOP.

Nay, my son,  
These things are mysteries : 'tis not for swords,  
However keen, to cut the Gordian knot  
Which we would fain unravel.

BLACK QUEEN'S KNIGHT.

Still, I hold——

BLACK KING'S BISHOP.

Patience awhile, my son, our brother there,  
A wise ecclesiastic, (though our foe,  
And slightly touched 'tis whispered with the taint  
Of Arius, but this I scarce believe),  
Raises his hand, as though intent on speech.

ERIC.

A pretty quarrel between Church and State !  
I think that chessmen are as wise as men,  
Or men as chessmen ; either cap will fit.

## WHITE KING'S BISHOP.

The morn has changed to noon ; the light  
Has sloped and fallen in the west ;  
And still the Prior kneels alone,  
With folded hands upon his breast.

The night draws on ; the voice of praise  
Rises and falls, but chant and hymn  
Pass all unheeded ; shadows dark  
Seem darker for the tapers dim ;

So, in the Prior's troubled heart  
The spark of faith shows doubts more dread ;  
Too great the strain ! he strives to speak,  
But senseless falls, as fall the dead.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ O, whither is wending yon bare-foot Friar,  
Not old, I ween, though his hair so white,  
And feeble his steps, though no word he speaks,  
Nor raises his eyes to the left or right ? ”

"O, he is a leech of exceeding skill ;  
Where he tarries, no fever can make its home ;  
And the Holy Father has heard of his fame,  
And therefore his footsteps are turned towards Rome."

"Then why does he linger? No doctor he,  
But a scholar, for learning far renowned ;  
And the Sacred College has sought for his aid  
Against a doubt that is gaining ground."

"Not so ; such need would not brook delay ;  
But a Prior sore troubled with doubts within,  
Is this pilgrim who journeys on foot to Rome,  
That the Holy Father may shrive his sin."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Sir Porter, there standeth a Friar without,  
Without he stands, nor will enter in  
Till he hath had speech of the Pope himself,  
That the Holy Father may shrive his sin."

"If he needs must speak to the Pope himself  
Let him tarry without at the Golden Gate,  
Where the Holy Father will rest him awhile  
For a breathing-space from the toils of State."

An old, old man is the Pope of Rome ;  
On a litter they bear him with gentle pace ;  
When they say that a Friar beseeches shrift,  
Not a wrinkle moves on his waxen face.

“ And can this be the Pontiff that carries the keys,  
Who governs the world by his slightest word?  
Oh ! a fool I have been for my journey so long,  
To tell a tale that will never be heard.”

Then a film shoots over the dull grey eye,  
Like the flickering tongue of the hooded snake ;  
And a thin, weak voice like a linnet's that pipes,  
Says, “ Fools would be fewer if silence spake.”

Low louted the Prior, all quaking for fear  
Of the man who could fathom his secret thought ;  
And his tale he told : how a masterful Knight  
Had shame on the blessed S. Peter brought.

No change comes over that waxen face  
Whose wrinkles deep fold the dull grey eye,  
Till the tale is told, and the Prior falls down  
On his face, and waiteth. A gentle sigh,

Scarce louder than an infant's, passed  
From earth to heaven, the thin lips curled :  
The smile serene, the piercing eye  
Bespoke the man who rules the world.

“ Not for my sake, my brother, but for yours  
Bring forth a flagon of the red, red wine,  
That this weak flesh may gather strength to speak  
The precious promise of the truth Divine.”

They bring him a flask of the red, red wine ;  
The piping treble grows firm and deep,  
Like a sea whose tempest so loud and strong  
May rise from a ripple that lulls to sleep.

“ Oh ! hard are the paths that the saints have trod ;  
Not for us to judge where they slipped or fell ;  
‘ What every man is in the sight of God,  
He is that,’ though claimed by the Powers of Hell.

“ In courage and mercy two names are chief  
On earth below, as in heaven above,  
S. Peter who holdeth the keys in fief,  
And with him S. John who does suit for love.

“ Nay ! sever them not, lest your hearts ye yield  
Through trial unventured or hopeless sin ;  
For courage and love are like sword and shield,  
Nor Satan himself through them both may win.

“ There is many a record of hard-won fight  
That leads men on to persist and dare ;  
Is there never ensample of fall from right  
That would save a sinner from dark despair ?

“ Ah, God ! I, too, who have run the race,  
Who have kept the faith when the light grew dark ;  
Should I e’er have outnumbered the day’s disgrace  
When I failed to haven S. Peter’s bark,

“ But for knowledge of this—that to him who dared,  
Who dared and failed when the waves waxed wild,  
A Hand was outstretched, and a path prepared  
O’er the deep, by a Father who helps His child?

“ Have I never through weakness denied my Lord,  
Yet lived to confess Him, for one sad look  
On the sinner so false to his plighted word—  
No, *the Saint who followed when all forsook?*

“ O children, the strong do not ask our aid,  
’Tis the weak who entreat us; my brethren, hear  
And teach; that the grace which S. Peter stayed,  
Turns shame into honour when Christ is near.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“ With an old man’s blessing, homewards  
Go in peace, but know my son;  
He is bravest with S. Peter  
Who is loving with S. John.”

ERIC.

Gramercy, gentle Bishop and fair Knight;  
And yet, methinks, too much old legends lack  
The flavour of this present work-day world.  
Would that my doubts were phantoms of the past;  
But no; they live and fold themselves and sting  
Like homely vipers, not like eastern asps,  
Those Queen-destroying themes for playwrights’ skill.  
Why even playwrights have outlived their day;  
Men go to see the act, and not the play.

CAROLLERS (*without*).

Eighteen centuries have sped  
Since on earth our Saviour came :  
Miracles and signs are dead ;  
But our hearts remain the same.

Gone are mighty Kings and Lords,  
Vanished world-wide Empires' fame ;  
Changed are customs, arts, and words ;  
Yet our hearts remain the same.

Idle arms are bows and spears,  
Tilt or tourney but a name ;  
Present griefs find present tears,  
For our hearts remain the same.

## CHORUS OF CHESSMEN.

Only a dream, a show, a fond delusion  
Is life, with all its pleasures and its pains ;  
We Chessmen strive, and at our strife's conclusion  
Find nothing worth the winning ; naught remains,  
Only a dream.

Only a dream ; till midnight bells are chiming,  
Their brief existence we with mortals share ;  
What are ideas but heights past human climbing ?  
Men fail, and call them " castles in the air,"  
Only a dream.

Only a dream, yet each one in his keeping  
Holds all that gives realities their name ;  
Hasten ; lest he who watches lose his sleeping  
Amongst us, and we vanish as we came,  
Only a dream.

---

*ERIC.*

Nay ! but this passes magic : helm and shield,  
Armour, and gay caparisons of war  
Fade, and give place to less attractive hues,  
More deadly weapons ; yet methinks the men  
Seem braver for their loss of bravery.  
Was ever knight more gallant than yon chief,  
Whose rank betrays itself by no device  
Save that which wins for him the proud salute  
Of victors to the vanquished, after years  
Of vain attempts to plant an iron heel  
On iron wills, and hearts more true than steel ?

## BLACK KING'S CASTLE.

Praise to the Knight of S. John who shielded his comrade's dishonour.

Praise to the Bishop who taught that courage is greatest in mercy.

This is the making of heroes, rugged, delighting in battle ;  
Yet, when the battle is ended, kindly and gentle as children.  
Great is the glory of war, of darkness and lightning begotten,  
Lowering lurid and fateful, breaking in thunder of cannon,  
Pitiless hailstorm of bullets, furious whirlwind of horsemen.  
So bursts the war-cloud without ; but fiercer the conflict  
within us,

Deep giving answer to deep, re-echoes out-clanging the trumpet,

Pulses out-throbbing the drum in tumult of passionate tempest.

Greater the glory of peace ; ah ! well I remember that morning :

Morning !—it seemed like a life, as closer and closer entwining,

Fold upon fold of the net enclosing our armies beleaguered,  
Tightened till way of escape was barred to the pitiful handful  
Left of our gallant array, once joyously proud and triumphant.

Then, when prolonging the strife was only a meaningless slaughter,

Knowing the end was at hand, I spake my last word by a herald,

Sueing for peace if it might be. Swift as a horseman could gallop

Answer came back, not in scorn, but greeting of brother to brother.

Honour to courage and strength, but greater the honour to mercy ;

Courage and strength could compel, but love led us willingly captive ;

Then we surrendered our hearts. And yet, I had cried in my anguish :

“ Better a thousandfold death ! ” but clear rang the challenge of duty :

“ Stand, for thy country demands thee. Care for the wives and the children,

Helpless for shedding of blood in fighting where fighting is hopeless ;

Care for thy soldiers astray, wide-scattered as having no shepherd ;

[ments ;

Care for the least to the last, sad gathering up of the frag-

This be thy calling, the sign that honour which waits on the  
captor  
Leaves not the captive bereft, but blesses both victor and  
vanquished."

Honour ! she beckons me now, for fain would I comfort my  
comrades  
Living or dying unknown, no glory to lighten their dark-  
ness,  
Found on the side of the wrong, injustice for justice mis-  
taking.

Was it so evil, O friends ? Behold, we were few against  
many,  
Bent upon freedom, yet heart-sore, loathing the cost of the  
contest,  
Sickness and maiming of heroes, weeping of widow and  
orphan,  
Wasting of homestead and city, hatred in households  
divided,  
Dragons' teeth bearing blood-fruit for devils to tread in the  
winepress ;  
Though for these things we kept silent, think ye our hearts  
were not burning ?

Yea, and though bitter our lot, who saw from the very  
beginning  
Nothing but mischief in store, the course of our state-craft  
misguided, [sion ;  
Leading of blind by the blind, our strife for an evil conclu-

Yet we remembered the past, the rift in our ancient  
Dominion,  
"Freedom to govern ourselves," the watchword that was as  
our birthright.  
"Right!" what is right but success? Our forefathers  
ventured rebellion;  
Victory gave them their right, redressing the balance of  
justice;  
Fortune of war was the priest that christened revolt "Inde-  
pendence."  
"Duty!" its claims were divided; "Country!" but which  
was our country?  
That of the larger idea, the "one out of many united,"  
"One," an abstraction sublime, but still at its best an ab-  
straction?  
Rather the "one" that we knew, the woods we had roamed  
in our boyhood,  
Orchards and pastures and waters, faces of neighbours and  
kinsfolk,  
All that made sympathy sweet, our home with its loving  
traditions.  
Little of worth were thy sons who failed thee in peril faint-  
hearted,  
Leaving thee, Mother and Queen, a prey to the many-voiced  
monster;  
Ye who condemn us as rebels, find ye no good in our  
evil?

Surely the Hand that restrained from plucking the tares in  
the wheatfield,

Planted the wheat in the tares we sowed in our sorrowful  
spring-time.

See, in the battle of life, how evil and good intermingle :  
Many a triumph of right achieved, yet the motive unworthy ;  
Many a cause of injustice won by consent of the righteous ;  
Ever a harvest whose wheat is courage and skill and endurance,

Error and weakness the tares men gather in heaps for the  
burning ;

Never a harvest where truth is chosen and error rejected.

No, for He sendeth His rain alike on the just and the  
unjust ;

No, for He maketh His sun to rise on the good and the evil.  
See, and be thankful. The reapers pass on through the  
cornfields rejoicing,

Here and there plucking the ears but leaving the harvest still  
standing ;

Yielding of many offences, merits scarce worthy the gleanings.  
Why are the reapers so gladsome? Well for us, comrades,  
that upwards,

There where the angels are busy, far in the billowy corn-  
fields

Bending with hundred-fold burden, ripens a bountiful in-  
crease, [abundance

First-fruits of mercy and love, the wheat in its countless

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Needing no tribute of earth save only a handful as earnest ;  
Earnest, in spite of the tares ungathered, unreckoned,  
forgiven.

This is our store though we tended evil for good in our  
blindness.

Courage, my comrades, our hope stands firm on the Infinite  
Mercy :

Ever the tares and the wheat must ripen together till  
autumn ;

Never the harvest of earth is that which is garnered in  
heaven.

## CHORUS OF BLACK PAWNS.

Cruel the east wind speeding piercing arrows,  
Dreary the sunlight chilled with gloomy haze ;  
Far is the prophecy of brighter days,  
Shrivelled the heart ; our future fades and narrows :  
There is no God.

Well—for our leaders ; though they meet reverses  
*They* hold their glory, keep their friends, their past,  
Always some help, some shelter from the blast ;  
*We* fall, we die—nor prayers avail nor curses :  
There is no God.

Good—for the rich who paradise invented ;  
Here all the prizes fall to rank and state.  
Toil for the poor, submission to their fate ;  
This is their gospel, keeping us contented ;  
There is no God.

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The great are only gracious when they need us ;  
Class instincts point us as their future foes.  
Not race with race, but rich with poor must close ;  
*They* lose their touch, if once they cease to lead us  
There is no God.

For this they train their priests to special pleading,  
Fabling a new world to redress the old,  
Holding out promises of rainbow gold,  
False hopes for ever from our grasp receding :  
There is no God.

No God ! when once the hungry peoples waken,  
The classes finding life no make-belief,  
But as *we* know it, want and pain and grief,  
Shall cry the loudest from high places shaken :  
“ There is no God ! ”

CAROLLERS (*without*).

Soft breathed the south wind ; earth with life was teeming ;  
Bright sunshine overhead, fairest outward seeming ;  
Joy flowed so strong and deep, faith and hope were lulled to  
sleep,

Seeking no morrow.

Chill blew the night-wind deeper darkness bringing,  
Dead lay the frozen world :—hark ! the angels singing  
Glad hymns to welcome morn : “Unto you the Christ is  
born,”

First-fruit of sorrow.

Still, while earth's pleasures fill our souls with gladness,  
God ! we forget Thee. Comes a time of sadness ;  
Then faith and hope and love, from Thy treasure-house  
above,

Freely we borrow.

WHITE KING'S KNIGHT.

I was coming home from a journey,  
A weary journey from town :  
'Twas dark ere we came to the junction,  
And whistled the signals down.

The scattered lamps in the suburbs  
Straightened in lines of light,  
And the hum of a busy city  
Was borne on the wings of night.

There was "something on before us"  
Till our strength of speed was past,  
And the engine panted and laboured,  
Ere we reached our goal at last.

The train drew up to the platform ;  
But while we yet steamed along,  
I saw a familiar figure  
Glide forth from the motley throng.

## *WHITE KING'S KNIGHT.*

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A moment more, and together  
We gossiped, as side by side  
The steps of the boy half running  
Kept pace with his father's stride.

Never again will that schoolboy  
Welcome me home from the train ;  
And never again will his footsteps  
Patter like midsummer rain.

'Twas nothing: why should I tell it ?  
It solves no problem of life,  
Explains not the meaning of evil,  
Reveals not the purpose of strife.

These questions must wait for their answer,  
(Was ever an answer to doubt ?)  
Yet I find in that " nothing " a token  
That leaves me content without.

My boy, when he hastened to meet me,  
Had little thought that the sign  
He was giving unsought to his father,  
Was bringing me nearer to Mine.

\* \* \*  
I shall one day come from a journey,  
The weary journey of life,  
And the night will darken around me  
As I shrink from the ceaseless strife.

The light that on earth was scattered  
Will gather more bright and clear,  
And a sound as of many waters  
Will murmur that heaven is near.

A few short gasps and endeavours,  
A fruitless labour of breath,  
Ere I make an end of my travel,  
And stand on the platform of death.

Yet shall I not tarry unwelcomed ;  
For long ere that last dread pain  
My boy will have hurried to greet me,  
And I shall have known him again.

If only—ah ! what is my token,  
What sign for my Father above,  
But this—that I hastened to meet Him  
When He came to my heart in love ?

## CHORUS OF WHITE PAWNS.

O be joyful in God, all ye lands ;  
We have seen, we have seen with our eyes  
Of the kingdoms to come upon earth,  
And the hopes of the children unborn ;  
Of the times of provision from dearth,  
And the granaries brimming with corn  
For the many who work with their hands ;  
That are hid from the great and the wise.

We have quaffed at the fountain of youth  
As it sprinkled our foreheads and lips,  
(And your plumage, O birds, for ye sing !)  
Where it sparkles, unsoiled by the cares  
That come thick when subjected it bears  
On its bosom the wealth of the ships ;  
Where men question the clearness of truth,  
Heavy-hearted, forgetting life's spring.

We have heard, we have heard with our ears,  
And our fathers have told of a past  
When the world took its creed from a prayer  
Seeking bread for the day and no more ;  
When the rich forsook ease with their peers,  
And the plenty of garner and store,  
That the few with the many might share,  
And the foremost take place with the last.

It was well that your faith died away,  
O ye rich, till it withered like grass.  
We have read, we have read, and we know  
How the leisure that riches ensure,  
How the training and culture of class  
Had their use, the foundations to lay  
Of a wisdom, whose laws shall endure  
When your children their birthright forego.

'Tis not chance that rolls onward the world ;  
Nor the classes, nor we are its guides,  
Yet we see that we grow to our rights  
Inch by inch with the growth of the State,  
And we trust in the God who provides.  
Though the thunderclouds threaten the heights,  
Not by us shall the lightnings be hurled ;  
We are strong, we are strong, we can wait.

**BLACK KING'S KNIGHT.**

And so Reynard bereft of his brush  
Vowed that foxes were better without ;  
And his brother who hankered for fruit  
Took his oath that the bunches were sour.  
Do you think that we value one rush  
What *you* say ? We were fools did we doubt  
You would take if you could—we dispute  
Not your will, my good friends, but your power.

CAROLLERS (*without*).

It is a winter night with starry sky,  
And see ! a troop of horsemen riding by.  
"What seek ye, friends ?" "Oh, we have seen a sign  
In heaven, tokening a birth Divine ;  
And we bring gifts to offer at His shrine."

"God speed ye gentle sirs ; but who are ye,  
Tall, stalwart swains : what came ye forth to see ?"  
"Shepherds an't please you ; even now a throng  
Of angels sang the birth foretold so long ;  
We go to see the wonder of that song."

"Ye simple shepherds, wherefore leave your fold,  
The rich have gone before with gifts and gold :  
What can ye offer ?" "Gifts of priceless worth ;  
The angels brought them down from heaven to earth ;  
Peace and goodwill ; we give them for His birth."

## WHITE KING'S PAWN.

Friends, I have a tale to tell you : now the world is gay and glad,

I have prospered, but remember always how I once was sad,

Poor and hungry, left deserted, prenticed to a hateful sot,  
Cruel, grasping, lazy, brutal : what was bad that he was not ?

Leather cutting was his business, there were but himself and me ;

That which killed the wife and daughters, drove the sons away to sea.

Well ! one day, my master sent me right away to Pentonville :

I must wait and bring the money ; two and sixpence was the bill.

So I waited and returning homewards, faint from want of food,

I was passing through an alley close to where old Smithfield stood.

I have tried in vain to trace it ; now the place is all pulled  
down ;  
Then it formed a home for labour, in the thick of London  
town ;  
Journeymen and cunning craftsmen, skilled in working steel  
and gold ;  
But the glory of that alley was a shop in which were sold  
Little fishes, bright or painted, set around with tiny hooks,  
Feathers neatly sorted forming many - coloured picture  
books,  
Rods and lines and floats and winches, glimpse of heaven  
for the boys,  
Paradise of unknown summer, city dreams of country joys.  
Wretched as I was, the tempting of those treasures made me  
stop,  
Press my face against the window, count the wonders of that  
shop :  
All at once the door flew open, and in making room to  
pass,  
Crash ! I ran against a workman carrying a globe of  
glass.  
I was collared in an instant, hands of iron held me down ;  
As I struggled, on the pavement rang my greatly-prized  
half-crown.  
Quick as thought my captor clutched it : "Just what he  
would have to pay [way.  
For the breakage," and, with curses, off he hurried on his

I was helpless ; though the women said it was a burning  
shame,

Words were nothing, might was strongest, no one knew the  
stranger's name.

Never could I face my master : forty years have come and  
gone,

Yet I sometimes wake affrighted for that outcast boy  
alone.

There I stood ; the crowd had scattered, each one to his  
daily care,

Only I, dry-eyed and silent, brooded on in blank despair.

What I did I know not : pictures burned themselves into my  
brain,

Unknown forms and places, never was reality so plain.

I can see them now distinctly, then I neither saw nor heard,  
For my heart so wildly throbbing, beating like a prisoned  
bird,

Seeking light and freedom, sinking broken from the crystal  
wall ;

So my spirit sank and left me waiting for the sky to fall.

Was it hours or only minutes till I started with a cry

As the fatal door re-opened, and a laughing boy ran by ?

Just my age he seemed, but taller, curly-locked, and slightly  
made,

And a fishing-rod just purchased, he triumphantly displayed.

Still I spoke not, but imploring raised my eyes to his—and  
then :

(What is it that gives the signal : "Man must help his fellow-men ?")

Schoolboy speech of kindly comfort : "Why, old fellow, what's the row ?"

And the torrent burst the flood-gates, nothing could restrain it now.

He had drawn me up a passage, safe enough from sight and reach,

There I told him all my story. Suddenly he checked my speech :

"Just you wait," and off he started : patiently I held my post,

Though so long his footsteps lingered that my hope was almost lost.

Yet some faith I kept—that trial taught me first to trust in God—

And he came, but empty-handed ; gone his treasured fishing-rod !

He had given up his pleasure, selling back untasted joy :

In my hand he placed the money : "Keep your pecker up old boy."

Ere I understood, (remember, friend I never knew before),  
He was gone beyond recalling, and I saw that face no more  
Save in fancy ; there I watch him weaving out his web of fate :

Well I read his fortune ; haply he may make his country great ;

Possibly himself ; more likely, he will sow and others reap,  
Forfeiting his own preferment, giving what he ought to  
keep.

Nay, perchance the world may deem him fool, Quixotic in  
his aim,

One of those whose friends say coldly : " Yes, he has him-  
self to blame."

Let it be so ; let his follies, sins it may be, have their say,  
Yet one friend shall stand his witness, pleading on the judg-  
ment day

For the man whose boyhood rescued one poor wretch in  
hopeless need,

Making life seem something better than a cry of selfish  
greed,

More than men can count by figures, treasure neither sold  
nor bought,

Profit that is worth the having though our projects turn to  
naught.

When I heard my comrade telling how a scarcely-noticed  
sign,

By the key of Death deciphered, opened him a door Divine ;  
All my soul ran forth to meet him for the bitter-sweet of  
pain,

For the Presence never heeded till we seek our love in vain.  
Truths there are, the deepest, strongest, never seen by those  
whose looks

[books,

Take account by pros and contras as a trader keeps his

Giving every act its motive, nay, not one but many springs ;  
Just as when the twelvemonth closes, patiently the merchant  
brings

Into focus all the countless issues which the bygone year,  
Day by day has raised and settled till he finds his balance  
clear,

Loss or profit. Very easy, looking back, to trace its cause,  
Classifying into sections, formulating into laws.

Even accidents or chances, turning points that make the  
mind

Take or leave the rails of custom ; these are measured or  
defined.

"Yours was such a chance ; the impulse, timely truly for  
your need,

Weakness, fruit of weakness ; spendthrift ancestry had sown  
that seed,

Easy-going, lazy feeling, hating pain in any form,  
Selfishness of sweet sensation liking sunshine more than  
storm ;

Nothing better." Take your answer : " More than for thy  
gifts of worth

God ! I thank Thee that Thou gavest worthlessness like  
this to earth."

Is it nothing, O my brothers, that a man should like to *give* ;  
Can we call that food unwholesome which enables us to live ?  
Is it not a sign that something underlies each act of love,  
Deeper than the mind's intention, higher motive from above ?

Neither sense nor reason prompts it, other cause is none  
than this—

That we *will* it, not from purpose, but because we take of  
His,

Each one has his pride in giving : often when I heard my  
mates

Cursing social rank and station, praising democratic states ;  
To myself I smiled and whispered : " All thou hadst thou  
gavedst me ;

I have neither gold nor silver, but I give my heart for thee,  
Thee and thine." I know my fellows ; none so proud as  
working-men :

Touch their pride of class for justice, little fear of danger  
then.

I could say a word in season. Often did I speak and well ;  
(So at least they said) ; they listened willingly, as I would tell  
How the safest path to progress lay in holding equal hands  
Both for rich and poor, in pressing onward moderate de-  
mands :

" Are the wealthy blind to justice ? prove ye juster than the  
rich,

Lest both they and you together wallow helpless in the  
ditch ! "

Like draws like, when those above us found our aim was just  
reform,

Not revolt, half-way they met us ; so we stayed the coming  
storm.

Ye who trace results to causes, fit this truce of class with  
class  
As you will—to boyish kindness and a broken piece of glass.

## WHITE KING'S CASTLE.

Give me your hand, my brother. Forty years  
Have changed the face you saw through boyish tears.  
Time changes not the heart : like gospel truth  
You read my life. A hasty careless youth,  
Unselfish for his very heedlessness ;  
A gentle man ; no more, thank God, no less.  
Nor yet quite useless since as steel with flint  
Our natures meeting struck the first faint glint  
That kindled till it raised the sacred flame  
Of sympathy—for this I praise His name.

My sympathies were ever with the ranks,  
The great unknown. The few win all the thanks  
Of king or country. While he lives, the prize  
Is destined for the captain ; when he dies,  
The poet sings his glory. To the mass  
Fortune gives niggardly, and records pass  
Like loaves, in batches. Yet I never sought  
In vain for volunteers ; they knew I thought  
Of them as persons, giving each his due,  
Not classing them, and thus their love I drew.

But ever as I gained increasing power  
And high position, darker clouds would lower  
Obscuring heaven till the world seemed nigh  
To unreality. It was not I,  
But Fortune helping me that won success.  
What were my gifts? A trick of saying: "Yes"  
Delight in giving, joy in pleasant smiles;  
Was I a hypocrite, with subtle wiles  
Fishing for men, and throwing shining darts  
To tempt their fancies, luring foolish hearts?

Nor I alone, but those who pictured schemes  
Past sense and reason, did they cheat with dreams?  
Was sympathy itself an empty sound,  
Sheer superstructure lacking solid ground,  
No surer argument for love or hate  
Than scarlet to a bull; were "home" and "state"  
Catchwords for ignorance, whereby the few  
Might fool the many; was religion true,  
Or immortality a mask for death,  
The last delusion for our parting breath;

Was there no God? My heart gave echo back:  
"No God." I looked upon the beaten track  
Where fare the many, and I saw the face  
Of one I knew: unmerited disgrace  
Had crushed him down to lead a sordid life

Debasing by its littleness ; his wife  
And children aged before their time by care.  
Were there a God would He disdain their prayer,  
Leaving them helpless as the hunter's spoil,  
Their life one long dull drudgery of toil ?

\* \* \* \* \*

Say, whence the change that o'er my fortunes passed ?  
My chariot wheels dragged heavily : at last  
They ceased to turn : my boasted gifts were gone ;  
My plans miscarried ; comrades one by one  
Proved hostile ; mystic writing on the wall  
In lurid characters foretold my fall.  
I fell, and falling found through fiery flame  
Of wrath and fear and pride and hate and shame  
A personality before unguessed :  
Possessed I was, and yet not self-possessed,

A Devil prompted me beyond control,  
Warping my mind and poisoning my soul.  
Then I defied him : lo ! my frame he rent  
Leaving me helpless, hopeless ; all intent  
Barren, and naught before me, save a fate  
Past human bearing. Crushed beneath its weight  
I sank, and then, (as drowning men are said  
To catch at straws), to one poor tattered shred  
Of faith in Him who pierced and bleeding hung,  
In blind convulsive agony I clung.

A moment's peace, while Satan held aloof,  
And then temptation. 'Twere a certain proof  
Of God, (though miracles had ceased), to find  
A gracious Presence influencing mind.

"Experto crede"—Let Him help me then,  
Granting me favour in the eyes of men  
As heretofore; but should He fail my need,  
God were a dream, and faith a broken reed:  
I wavered, sorely tried,—then sought him out  
Whose cruel fate had emphasized my doubt.

Sorrow had crowned him with a sad wan grace,  
The majesty of grief; his care-worn face  
Brightened and softened as I said my say.  
"Time was, my friend, when I was wont to pray  
For good that came not; now I simply trust:  
We too are Gods though humbled in the dust.  
As Gods ourselves we *know* the Heart Divine,  
Not sons but strangers they who seek a sign.  
He hears as we would hear; as we would give,  
No less, He gives: shall Life itself not live?

Our heart is breaking; lo! we lay it bare  
Before the Lord; its nakedness is prayer.  
Our blindness, weakness, anguish, self-confessed,—  
The things themselves, not words,—on Him we rest  
As though we knowing could ourselves fulfil

What we unknowing asked. Our own His will,  
And we? *Ah, God! Thy glory!* Dáre we choose,  
(I speak from knowledge), never would we lose  
Thy presence. If our cross can make Thee stay  
To share it with us—take it not away!

\* \* \* \* \*

Himself was with you in that gift of love  
You lost when proving : natures from above  
Disdain our trammels. Yet the grace withdrawn  
Again he proffers, prompting you to scorn  
To tempt the Lord your God, as scorn you do,  
Else wherefore here? You hold that friend as true  
Who turns not though your witness evil saith ;  
To trust *against* not *for* the proof is faith.”  
—I left him, knowing that 'twas not in vain  
He suffered : his the sacrament of pain.

ERIC.

And did your fortune change like his of old,  
Who patient in affliction found the end  
More rich than the beginning ; larger herds,  
More wealth and fairer sons?—You may not tell?  
'Tis better so : each mortal for himself  
Must dree his weird ; for were a proof vouchsafed  
Of present answer to our cry for help,  
Then prayer were selfishness ; or did we know

For certain that our prayers remain unheard,  
Then farewell hope. And yet one subtle point  
Arises on the argument. We grant  
That miracles are past ; the seed once sown  
Must bear its fruit : but ever larger grows  
The social field where mind directs the course  
Of famine, war and pestilence, of trade,  
Of fortunes, good or ill, of life itself ;  
Then granting influence of mind on mind,  
Of God and Devil prompting ; then our prayers  
May have their answer through our fellow-men,  
Themselves and we unwitting.

What is this ?

Behind yon dark array a sombre cloud  
Whence threatening shadows brandish phantom spears,  
Goading their victims till they seek their doom,  
Urging each other on, and yet not all,  
For see ! a gallant band has gathered round  
The King's Castellan, and a gleam of sun  
Lights on them through the storm-cloud. Ha ! a flash,  
A blast that makes the heavens shake and jar,  
Filling the air with wild tumultuous sound,  
Evoking spectres from unhallowed ground !

**CHORUS OF BLACK PIECES.**

Spirits of ill, who have power over mortals,  
Holding the keys of the sensuous portals,  
Forcing your entrance through vision and feeling,  
Working in secret, your presence concealing ;  
Urging desire through your subtle contrivance,  
Turning to sinfulness chance and connivance ;  
Lives there the man who resists your temptation ?  
Bring him to ruin, then prove his damnation ;  
Were he elect, God would show forth His might in him ;  
Let Him deliver him if He delight in him.

## BLACK QUEEN'S CASTLE.

'Twas over, with never a word  
Of comfort from kinsman or friend ;  
It struck to my heart like a sword,  
To think that such shame was the end.

Ah ! woe for the sin that betrayed,  
That slept while my life was aglow,  
That woke when faint-hearted I prayed,  
And struck with one terrible blow.

Was I better or wiser : who knows ?  
Moralties change with the years.  
I was older, preferring repose  
To feverish longings and fears.

It came with a whisper, a glance,  
An ominous shake of the head ;  
Club scandal, the turning askance  
That tokens the socially dead.

Then talk became action ; the Court  
Was flooded with nameless disgrace :  
There was never a devilish thought,  
But they printed its proof on my face.

*It* passed : though atonement I made,  
An outcast I stood in the land :  
For the lines that my likeness pourtrayed,  
Seared deep with their merciless brand.

Then followed the malice of man,  
The enmity won by success ;  
When each throws a stone where he can,  
And each adds his weight to the press

Till it breaks ; and so ruin befell  
My fortune as well as my fame :  
I was—no ! it were useless to tell  
The lingering wreck of my shame.

And yet in one thing I was blest :  
That she, who was faithful and true,  
Had passed with a smile to her rest :  
“To wait,” as she whispered, “for you.”

Me ? a devil more certain of hell,  
For knowing and loving the right  
So wisely, and nearly so well  
As wrong, that my darkness seemed light.

Duplicity—that was my curse ;  
Speaking evil and good in a breath,  
Praising better and doing the worse,  
Preaching life, when not practising death.

Yet *she* loved me, and yonder she lies  
Just there through yon cleft in the tree.  
I forgot—'tis my thoughts, not my eyes  
That bring back the landscape to me.

On her grave I would rest my last look,  
Ere leaving old England for aye ;  
And I wearily paced towards that nook ;  
Bent down by the infinite “nay.”

It was “never” for her and for me ;  
No meeting again with my wife,  
Though mercy were deep as the sea,  
Though Christ had paid death with His life.

No hope : surely nothing could add  
A pang to that pitiless thought.  
Yes ! I felt my arm touched by a lad :  
“Please, yer honour, I’ve just been and bought

“This here flower, for yer allus been kind,  
Both you and yer Missus, to Jack,  
And I hopes as you’ll take it to mind  
You of us, as yer not coming back.”

---

So he left me. I planted that flower,  
'Twas a hyacinth, over the grave ;  
I had said my good-bye ; in an hour  
I caught my first glimpse of the wave,

And heard its unceasing refrain :  
" He was only a half-witted lad,  
He'd have cursed me if he had been sane ;  
He was grateful because he was mad."

'Twas meet that my lost one above  
Should shriek amidst measureless joy,  
To see her one tribute of love  
Was misplaced—by an idiot boy.

CAROLLERS (*without*)

How shall we soothe the fears  
Of those whose fairest years  
Are spent in worldliness and toil and strife ;  
What can we say to prove  
That broken scraps of love  
May far outweigh a seeming selfish life ;  
But this—that Christmas-tide  
Counts more in heaven than all the worlds beside ?

The earth is but a speck  
Lost amidst rise and wreck  
Of countless systems in the heavenly plan.  
Though cycles wax and wane,  
Infinites remain ;  
A drop in ocean is life's rounded span ;  
Yet boundless Time and Space  
Take all their landmarks from one Day of Grace.

---

The world is growing old  
Through centuries untold  
    Of fire and flood and elemental change ;  
Through ceaseless birth and death,  
And breath succeeding breath,  
    Each new departure taking wider range ;  
Yet all its truest worth  
Is borrowed from this one ignoble birth.

This then the Angel-psalm,  
Despairing thoughts to calm :  
    That He,—who gave the multitudes their bread  
From unintentioned store,  
Yet made the morsels more  
    Than erst, although five thousand folk had fed,—  
Will keep His sacred tryst,  
And bless the fragments that men give for Christ.

## CHORUS OF BLACK PIECES.

Beings who hate what is noble of nature,  
Dwarfing the gods if ye may to your stature ;  
Find ye a hero beyond all comparing,  
Matchless in planning, unrivalled in daring,  
Victory waiting wherever he leadeth,  
Honour undying the watchword he heedeth,  
Never a thought to entice him from duty ;  
Strike him unguarded and lure him with beauty.  
Send a Delilah with chains and beguilement,  
Dragging him down through the sloughs of defilement :  
Were there a God, He would guard what is right in him,  
Let Him deliver him if He delight in him.

## BLACK QUEEN.

They said I was fairest of women though base-born and  
mean ;

And they thought to win favour by bribes, bringing gifts f  
a Queen ;

But I knew in my innermost heart I was better than this,  
And I longed for the day when the world should be won  
with a kiss.

For my life was athirst with the burning of glorious fire,  
And my pulses beat fiercely and fast with a boundless  
desire ;

Yet I waited the time and the man, though I counted the  
hours

While the buds slowly swelled till they brake in a snow-  
storm of flowers.

Oh, was ever a triumph like mine ! that an ignorant child,  
A nurse-maid, a pitiful drudge, by her beauty beguiled,

Till the painter who sought an ideal drew life from my  
face,  
And the turn of my step in the dance was a transport of  
grace,  
And the simplest attire on my form became exquisite art,  
And the burden of song when I carolled went straight to the  
heart ?  
So I blossomed, and Fortune and Fame laid their crowns at  
my feet ;  
And I dallied with Pleasure and Power : ah ! Springtime  
was sweet.  
But the world was astir with a tempest of glory and  
death,  
And away, where the South wind awakens white crests with  
its breath,  
And the Gaul and the Briton joined battle on ocean and  
strand,  
And the Pride of the sea challenged place from the Pride of  
the land ;  
Where the arms of the Corsican stretched to their outermost  
girth ;  
It was there that the blow must be struck for the lordship of  
Earth.  
It was there, in the court of a King that I met *him*, my  
fate :  
Was he all so unlike to the crowd that I thought him so  
great ?

I know only this ; he was foremost wherever he moved :

He was born to be victor, and I — was a woman — and loved.

Then my spirit passed forth from my keeping, though sign  
I made none ;

While my passion gained strength day by day from the glory  
that shone

In the wake of his ship as she bore him through battle and  
storm,

Till men marvelled, so great was the soul in so fragile a  
form :

There was none to withstand him in council or match him  
in fight ;

What he willed, that he dared ; what he dared, with his  
sword he made right.

In those days there were heroes ; and proudest of all was his  
name :

But none prouder than I, as my nature caught fire from his  
flame,

And I gave myself up to his cause, holding treasure as  
naught,

Nor sparing my labour till princes and peoples were  
wrought

To his will ; and his captains and sailors relied on my  
aid,

For my might was the girdle of Love, and my words were  
obeyed.

Then at last came an hour when the fleet ships were checked  
in the chase  
Of the Frenchman, whose doubles and turns ever lengthened  
the race,  
And baffled the hounds till though staunch they sought  
shelter and rest,  
But none durst receive them ; and now they had turned from  
their quest,  
So sore was their strait, but for me : though man's courage  
had failed  
To harbour my friends, yet a woman dared all and pre-  
vailed.  
For I played on ambition by hopes, and on weakness by  
fears ;  
And the heart of my mistress and Queen I besieged with my  
tears  
Till she yielded and lured from the King what his Council  
forbade,  
Friendly help for our fleet ; nor for long was that succour  
delayed,  
Nor laggard our sails ere our vessels in battle array  
Sought the foe in his harbour of vantage and brought him to  
bay.  
And I had my reward when the victor proclaimed that to  
me,  
Most of all was the praise for his gift to the Queen of the  
Sea.

And he loved me, and won me, and ever fresh garlands of  
fame

He wove for my brows till the world seemed too small for  
my name.

\* \* \* \* \*

There was bloodshed in oceans ; why turn to that one faded  
stain ?

There were widows by thousands ; why shrink if one wife  
loved in vain ?

He was mine, mine by right ; there are passions too strong  
for our creeds :

What are one or two husks in a harvest of glorious deeds ?  
Not mean or ignoble the love that scorned pleasure or  
ease

Where was honour to win, or a rival disputing the seas.

We were lords of the world, but Love held us as slaves to  
his might :

Ah ! God, how we loved ! and for this, though my day  
turned to night,

My glory to shame, though I fell in a moment of time,  
And the reptiles that wallowed and battered in treacherous  
slime

Set their teeth in my flesh ; though men mocked at my hero's  
bequest,

Leaving me and my child to his country ; though shunned  
as a pest

By those who had fawned at my feet ; though the beast in  
his den  
Found more shelter than I, a lone exile, an outcast from  
men,  
Left to die like a dog in a ditch ;—yet for all that has  
been ;  
I am great—I have lived, I have loved, I have ruled as a  
Queen.

CAROLLERS (*without*).

The purest name that maiden bears,  
The name that Joy with Sorrow shares  
Is Mary—"bitter-sweet":  
For Mary gave our Saviour birth,  
And Mary for His way from earth  
Prepared His willing feet;  
And through His dying pain,  
Another Mary sorrowed with these twain.

Oh! watchers of that blessed shame,  
Fain would we borrow with your name  
Your gifts for wife and maid:  
Yet Mary,—not that love of thine  
So near akin to love Divine  
That flesh shrinks back afraid,—  
The path thy footsteps trod,  
Bespake thee gentlest mother—but of God.

Nor yet thy gratitude we crave,  
Fond heart that touch alone could save,  
    Outcasting devils seven ;  
We know not how to thank like thee  
From Satan's very self set free,  
    Upsnatched from hell to heaven ;  
    Nor dare we hope for sight  
Of those whom we for sepulture have dight.

Less daring, if we turn to thee  
Whose homely gift was sympathy,  
    A quiet, stedfast will ;  
The "other Mary," else unknown,  
Making thy sister's grief thine own ;  
    Such comfort soothes us still,  
    And best befits the morn  
Whereon to share man's sorrow God was born.

**WHITE QUEEN.**

For comfort of Thy people am I sent,  
I, who myself find comfort most of all  
In helping, though the helping hand so small  
A woman's mission and therewith content,  
As those whose hearts on ministry are bent ;  
Who feed Thy sheep, or failing strength recall  
To mind and body, breaking Fortune's fall,  
Or easing Life's too hard arbitrament.  
O sweet companionship where human aid  
Meets human need ! your witness shews how near  
Is Love divine whose skill not only mends,  
But turns defects to uses. So 'tis said :  
That crystals cut to make dim eyesight clear,  
Gave the far vision that through space extends.

## **WHITE QUEEN.**

---

Sorrow and sickness ask especial care,  
Tender entreating, softer touch or speech,  
Than fits this rugged work-day world, where each  
Is only one of many trained to bear  
The brunt of Life's unceasing waste and wear :  
Naught save endurance, and the larger reach  
Of contests hardly won, can fitly teach  
The hand to conquer and the heart to dare.  
Happy their lot who prosper—yet 'tis writ :  
"Blessed are they that mourn." The starry space  
Is veiled by daylight, countless worlds may roll  
Unheeded, when Earth's little lamp is lit :  
So Fortune dims the universe of Grace.—  
O day well lost, whose losing saves the soul !

Our sun is source of life and light to men ;  
Stars are no more than points to human eyes ;  
Pin-pricks on paper picture forth the skies  
To watchers of the night. Yet only then  
We learn how small our part in "where and when,"  
How proof, opposed to narrow judgment, lies  
In tokens Night vouchsafes, but Day denies,  
And Earth unstedfast *turns* to wider ken.  
So, busy men while all goes well are blind  
To larger signs that shew Life's little round  
Servant not lord amidst unnumbered spheres :  
Only when Fortune's sun has set, we find  
Nature herself to larger natures bound,  
And Earth diminishing as Heaven nears.

## CHORUS OF BLACK PAWNS.

Strive as we may for our freedom, with threefold scourges  
they wait,  
Seize us and drag us to torture. Fools to have courted our  
fate,  
Knowing and daring the worst for love of some fanciful right :  
Now they revenge our rebellion, and none can protect from  
their might.

Whatsoever a man soweth,  
That shall he reap :  
Whensoever a man knoweth,  
He learns to weep.

Folly ! to tell us that troubles with increase of blessings are  
fraught ;  
Surely if Patience and Prudence be virtues, why bring them  
to naught ?  
Madness ! to chatter of purpose when lightnings strike one  
in a crowd :  
Purpose ! the curse we were born to, and shaped to the shape  
of a shroud.

Whatsoever a man soweth,  
That shall he reap :  
Whensoever a man knoweth,  
He learns to weep.

## WHITE QUEEN.

"I *will* not ; though my soul in swathes is wound  
By hands unseen which evil thoughts fulfil ;  
Else never would I sin against my will,  
As sin I do, (my true allegiance drowned,  
Steeped in Nepenthe), knowing well the sound  
Of hostile challenge, and the meed of ill  
For those who yield, yet unresisting still :  
Help ! in the flames they plunge my body bound ! "

\* \* \* \* \*

The King leapt up affrighted from his throne :  
"But three within yon raging gulf were cast,  
And lo ! another ! Come ye forth, O Three."  
Then forth they came, no sign of burning shewn  
On flesh or garb, for all that fiery blast,  
Save perished bonds : the flames had set them free.

The bonds which hold the soul in slumber deep  
Are spun of custom's strong and subtle thread :  
We heed not Providence, well clothed and fed  
From goods in store ; no anxious watch we keep  
For sudden foe, but eat and drink and sleep,  
Munitioned by our skill of hand or head ;  
Our lips, but not our hearts, ask daily bread ;  
Shepherds ourselves, we follow not like sheep.  
Yet : " Out of Egypt have I called my son "  
'Tis writ.—Through long bewilderment of fears  
We cross the desert, where no human hand  
Availeth aught, that we may lean on One  
Whose arm alone through all the waste of years  
Can guide us safely to the Promised Land.

Misfortune ! so we call it, when the load  
Is forced upon us till the crushing weight  
O'erwhelms us, and we gird at ruthless Fate :  
"That ever we should tread so rough a road :"  
Yet had some noble purpose been our goad,  
Or conscious discipline for high estate,  
Our pain were lightsome howsoever great,  
But not on thralls are laurel wreaths bestowed."  
Misfortune ? Nay ! no jewel ever placed  
On human breast, but pales as tarnished dross,  
By that of the Cyrene compelled to take  
Our Saviour's burden. What were lives disgraced  
To us, should Christ hereafter say : "The cross  
You bore was Mine ; you suffered for My sake."

## CHORUS OF BLACK PIECES.

Why should men pine for hereafter when Life is so fair upon  
earth,  
Wise and well ordered by reason, awaiting a man from his  
birth ;  
Trial sufficient to train him, but final success for the just ;  
Never a sign of the future when once he returns to the dust ?

Howsoever a man dareth,  
He is but breath :  
Wheresoever a man fareth,  
The end is death.

Who are these that refuse to read, though the letters be  
graven on rock ;  
Seeking for grapes upon thistles, good fruit on an alien  
stock ;  
Born to misfortune and ruin, sport of the winds and the  
waves ;  
Boasting of knowledge and freedom, dying like ignorant  
slaves ?

Howsoever a man dareth,  
He is but breath :  
Wheresoever a man fareth,  
The end is death.

How should a miracle serve them? 'Twere only an increase  
of toil ;

Moments or minutes of respite before they are bound with  
the spoil.

What though by keeping of angels, their feet stood an  
hundred times fast ?

Scarce were the wonders worth working if lonely they fall  
at the last.

Howsoever a man dareth,

He is but breath :

Wheresoever a man fareth,

The end is death.

## WHITE QUEEN.

'Tis Life's fair morn : in vain we seek our dead ;  
The other worlds are hidden from our sight ;  
How should we see them for the flood of light  
Brimming the azure distance overhead ?  
'Tis Life's dull eve, and gathering clouds are spread  
Fold upon fold across the face of night ;  
What can we see ; how hope to read aright  
The dark beyond, when once the breath has sped ?  
Thy triumph, Prince of Earth, with dazzling sun  
Or gloomy shade to veil yon gracious Face,  
That men should have no other gods but thee,  
Lost in time service. See ! thy day is done ;  
The clouds roll back and glittering beacons trace  
The Timeless pathways of Eternity.

Through the long night they toiled, but toiled in vain :  
Yet patting forth they plied the heavy oar,  
With patient labour cast the nets once more,  
And slowly circling swept the mimic main.  
The dragging mesh could scarce withstand the strain,  
As through the deep its burden downward bore :  
But now a struggling, surging, flashing store  
Shews near the surface, and they guess their gain :  
Sure, such a prize did never fishers land !  
But only think : for all this shoal so great,  
Their creels were bare without the timely word  
From yon lone stranger on the shelving strand ;  
And learn that toil wins fortune soon or late.

\* \* \* \* \*

The loved Disciple said : " It is the Lord."

Nor now nor ever shall we see on earth  
The faces loved, no more the voices hear :  
Is it sheer fancy that the dead are near,  
That angels guide our steps to better worth,  
And demons drag us down with baleful mirth ?  
Could we but touch, but feel some presence here  
Other than self, man's brotherhood were dear,  
Our life transfigured, and our dying, birth——

\* \* \* \* \*

An empty tomb, a broken heart, a cry :  
"Taken away—I know not where ;" but Thou  
Wert there to glorify lament to praise :  
"Mary !" She turning knew her Master nigh :  
Eternal word : "Thou may'st not touch Me now,  
That thou may'st *know* Me through the after days."

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CHORUS OF CHESSMEN.

STROPHE.

Never the same : the restless tide of being  
    Ebbs ere its flow is spent ;  
Nor ear with hearing, neither eye with seeing,  
    Lulleth to sweet content ;  
    No present fancies last ;  
Fairer the future, sweeter still the past,  
    Never the same.

Wisdom is young : time was when Man like Nature  
    Battled in open strife ;  
When cruel hearts and craft and strength of stature  
    Carried the palm of life.  
    That time has passed away,  
And Mind nor loves nor hates like brutish clay.

Never the same : the fount of dead tradition  
    Wells from a poisoned spring :  
No song divine, when answering contrition  
    Curses like war-cries ring.  
    Go ! pen your psalms anew,  
But other hands than yours in blood imbrue,  
    Never the same.

## ANTISTROPHE.

Ever the same : one Word throughout the ages,  
Deeper than outward forms ;  
Soundings of ocean, though the tempest rages,  
Vexed not by passing storms ;  
And on that Word we rest,  
Our past and future in the present blest,  
Ever the same.

Wisdom is old : though arms or bribes succeed not,  
Ambush can scarcely fail :  
Peace ! peace ! they cry, and men town-nurtured heed n  
Signs of the savage trail.  
Think ye the Powers of Ill  
Dead, when ye see not how they work their will,  
Ever the same ?

Ever the same : the Psalmist hurled his thunder,  
Warring with evil men :  
*We* see, behind the curtain torn asunder,  
Prompters beyond his ken ;  
And reading through the lines,  
Pray for his fall who God and Man maligns,  
Ever the same.

STROPHE.

Ever alone : no enemy or neighbour ;  
Each for himself must care :  
Why should another profit by our labour  
Save when he earns his share ?  
Why meet in arms a foe ?  
Buy him : the wise both love and strife forego,  
Ever alone.

Foolish it is to give without receiving,  
Sowing and not to reap :  
Wise if the lesser gains to others leaving,  
More for ourselves we keep :  
Surely those hands succeed  
Which give when gifts to self-advantage lead,  
Ever alone.

Ever alone : in living and in dying,  
Careful and calm and strong ;  
Curbing our passions, on control relying,  
Hoping to prosper long :  
Knowing too well to trust ;  
For meet life as we may—meet death we must,  
Ever alone.

## ANTISTROPHE.

Never alone : one world-wide kin of brothers  
    Bearing the common load,  
Asking no price for kindly deeds to others,  
    Thankful for help bestowed ;  
    Making no truce with Sin,  
Herald of Death, if once to terms it win,  
    Never alone.

Faith begets faith : as ye shall mete be meted  
    Care of your fellow-men :  
For others work ;—*your* work shall be completed ;  
    Your day fulfil, and then  
    God's peace your souls shall keep,  
For so He giveth His beloved sleep.

Never alone : that formless void One only  
    Traversed with none to guide :  
God knew forsakenness, when mocked and lonely,  
    Scourgèd and pierced He died ;  
    And by that last black hour  
Through Death's dark gate we pass begirt with Power,  
    Never alone.

WHITE KING.

Our task is done : put by the mimic host ;

Yet stay, O stranger, ere we close the board,

The while I proffer what I value most,

The fairest treasure from my palace hoard,

The thought that sums the measure of my days.

“ Only a thought,” you say, “ and this a king ! ”

Only a king of chessmen, one who plays

When mortals work ; the shadow not the thing.

I dreamed : “ How wisely, were I king indeed,

My hands should turn the subtle reins of State ;

Here would I curb, there urge to swifter speed,

Making my people rich, my kingdom great.

“ Yet more, (for Virtue is my chiefest aim),

How my ensample from its lofty height

Should draw men upwards till my single fame

Was lost amidst our constellation bright.”

A not ignoble dream. You know how long  
Unseen, unsought, we chessmen idle lie ;  
My day-dreams were my heaven. Is it wrong  
To snatch a blissful foretaste ere we die ?

What are our day-dreams ? Poppies for the mind,  
Soul anæsthetics, sleepy songs to soothe,  
Birds downward gliding, sails before the wind ;  
A world we make ourselves may well run smooth :

None else its heroes ! We the wisest, best ;  
Our virtue always victor at the last ;  
Our worth acknowledged, with the added zest  
Of conquered prejudice, and perils past.

Could gods do more, or heaven shew more fair ?  
Ah ! fruitless tilling of a barren land !  
Time lost while building castles in the air,  
Might save our houses from the shifting sand.

False rest unfits us for our daily task  
Seeming so mean beside some larger sphere  
By Fancy sunlit ; there content we bask,  
Forgetful of the pressing problem near.

For each, beside the game that all must play,  
One special quest can solve, which more than all,  
His gifts, his failings fit him to essay ;  
And whoso shrinks from this neglects his call.

Ah ! could we only know and strive and wait,  
Each can be best in something ; though unseen,  
Unwrit, that something makes him truly great ;  
The step by which a Pawn becomes a Queen.

Unlike yet like is human life to chess :  
We play and lose, but mark the losing move ;  
Future encounters former faults redress ;  
One game is lost, henceforward we improve.

Not so with Man : his faults he needs must bear,  
His and his father's ; not for him to claim  
A fresh set board, another starting fair :  
For life and not for love, he plays the game.

Not always so. In Nature as in Mind  
Are times of sleep, of deep refreshing rest,  
When evil growths die out or prove more kind,  
When shafts miscarried truer aims suggest.

But used by custom to such healing change,  
So well attuned to harmonies before,  
You weave fresh destinies nor think it strange,  
As one by one you drop the threads of yore.

Yet sometimes Life like morning dawns afresh,  
Fair and unblemished. See ! the tangled cord  
No more a Gordian knot ; the fatal mesh  
Unloosed as though 'twere severed by a sword.

A miracle like this comes home to none,  
Save through experience : we chessmen know  
How often when the game is lost and won,  
Our ranks are formed again in serried row,  
And you, O stranger, this same wonder face,  
Of Nature raised to Supernature's height,  
When goodness through morality you trace,  
And Conscience, through your consciousness of right.

To see yourselves with other people's eyes,  
To feel as others feel is moral force ;  
Self-knowledge, by whose help you slowly rise  
Step after step in uneventful course.

To see yourselves as human natures seem,  
With all their mingled motives understood,  
Is Revelation ; consciousness supreme  
Whose touch transfigures evil into good.

A man may batten on unholy things,  
Or thrive on meannesses more vile than sins :  
Shew him himself ; with loathing back he springs,  
The old life passes and the new begins.

'Tis thus in chess : full well we know its laws,  
All save the one which sets the board again ;  
That motive owns direct immediate cause,  
Not move by move in long unbroken chain.

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'Tis thus in life : though known through every term  
The laws of growth, to birth you find no clue ;  
The miracle which formed the primal germ,  
Still shows itself, transforming " old " to " new."

Nature or Supernature ? If you play  
One game, or one of many, none can guess ;  
Nor if the fight once lost, so lost must stay,  
Or start anew unbiassed as in chess.

The very burden crushing you to earth,  
May or may not be turned to counterweight ;  
Your fear of death become your hope of birth :  
" May or may not " : nor fixed nor free is Fate.

Here speaks a Personality whose plan  
Exceeds your measurement : the straits which part  
Sequence from consequence, surpass your span ;  
The undiscovered country has no chart.

A King myself, though only Piece and Pawn  
Obey my bidding ; ne'er should my behest  
Be known by forecast, or the veil be drawn  
From Royal counsels by intrusive test.

Nor fixed nor free is Power supreme : I reign  
By law, but over law I law assume.  
Think you my clemency is asked in vain,  
Or tabled for law-breakers to presume ?

The miracle we prove is like to yours ;  
An interregnum breaking Nature's reign :  
Whilst I am free, the law of chess endures ;  
Then lapses till the game begins again.

I solve my problem. To one's self though blind,  
Another's eyes may turn the false to true :  
For this one evening was my quest designed,  
And this the treasure that I give to you :

The thought that something which I cannot prove,  
Itself is token of a larger scheme,  
A world beyond ; upon these squares I move,  
But *there* reality and *here* the dream.

Not we ourselves the chess-board re-array ;  
Your destinies are shaped beyond your ken ;  
And thus I know that higher Natures play  
With us at chequers, as in life with men.

**BLACK KING.**

Still as of old thou art dreaming,  
Leaving the near for the far ;  
Losing the truth in its seeming,  
Searching the skies for a star.  
Versed in design and decreeing,  
Skilled in fantastic conceit ;  
Busy with fate and foreseeing,  
Blind to the pit at thy feet.  
Miracles ! yes, there are plenty,  
Most that is under the sun :  
Why should we leave out the twenty,  
Pinning our faith upon one ?  
" Miracle " only means wonder ;  
Name not impossible acts :  
There you and I part asunder,

All my belief is in facts,  
Things in their rareness or frequency  
Classified : hence we have laws  
Telling of method and sequence,  
Silent of ultimate cause.  
All that we learn from their speaking,  
Whether as chessmen or men,  
Proves not the " why " we are seeking,  
Only the " how and the when."  
Wherefore to giants men grow not,  
Why we should move as we do,  
Save that it is so ; I know not :  
Tell me, O stranger, do you ?  
Fain would my rival persuade you  
" Fortune is proof of a Mind  
Ruling the forces that made you : "  
Nay ! it is you that are blind.  
Fortune may oftentimes prove faithless,  
Man reason wide of the mark,  
Pass through a thousand deaths scathless,  
Die from a step in the dark.  
This is no wanton exception,  
Laws are not broken at will :  
Fate is your lack of perception,  
Fortune your absence of skill.  
Action competes with reaction,  
Peace in its turn begets strife :

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All you can know but a fraction  
Left from the summing of life.  
Yet, had you wisdom to learn it,  
Laws are perfected through change,  
Natural when you discern it,  
Wonderful only when strange.  
Miracles cease to be wonders  
Once they are matters of course ;  
Children alone when it thunders,  
Dread supernatural force.  
So ends the miracle,—treasured  
(Granting of course it was true),  
Only for this, that it measured  
Large by the little men knew.  
Folly to beat the bush longer ;  
“Miracle” really means lie :  
Come, let us see which is stronger,  
You, O my rival, or I.  
Surely, if Life be a struggle  
Dwarfed by a larger campaign,  
Some supernatural juggle  
Turning man's loss into gain,  
Then are your miracles needless,  
Why intervention at all ?  
Wrestlers of triumph were heedless,  
Gained they a prize by their fall.  
Changing the *vénue* is fencing ;

You and I know very well,  
Ending keeps touch with commencing,  
Trees will be found where they fell.  
Miracles graft upon Nature  
Something that Nature disproves ;  
Men adding cubits to stature,  
Chessmen extending their moves.  
Say, then, if losing or winning,  
Ere the last rally is fought,  
Since you and I knew beginning,  
Was there such miracle wrought ?  
Only in ancient tradition  
Castles move crosswise like Queens,  
Captives come back to position,  
Phantom defence intervenes.  
Dreaming so graceful and pleasant  
Fits not with age as with youth ;  
Where is your sign for the present ?  
Living, not dead, should be Truth.  
All that we ask is some token,  
Proof that a Presence is near ;  
Let but the stillness be broken,  
Sunshine or shadow appear.  
Surely the Player who moves you,  
(If there be Players at all),  
Knows that his silence disproves you ;  
Fails not to answer your call ?

No?—not a sign from the distance,  
Time then my triumph to claim ;  
Yield, or else prove your assistance :—

ERIC.

*Strangest, where all is strange ! The vision fades,  
The men are only chessmen after all ;  
The game, the one I followed on the board,  
Just as I left it ere I fell asleep,  
Wanting but one more move for Black to win ;  
Not you, but I, Sir King : I make it—thus.*

BLACK KING (*faintly, as from afar*).

“Check ! and this gives me the game.”

ERIC.

Hard, though in sport, that wrong should conquer right ;  
Or I should help to lose the day for White,  
Thinking that Black would recognize my aid,  
Forgetful that delusions when self-made  
Defy realities. What did it mean,  
The tangled exit of the closing scene ;  
That vanquished King, his look less sad than proud,  
And this with all his service disallowed ?  
Ah ! woe is me who fail at slighter test,  
In solemn earnest than this toy in jest :  
I see it now—there lies a larger field  
Where man may conquer though a chessman yield.  
Black reasoned closely : there exists no scheme  
Dividing things that are from things that seem.

And yet, and yet,—methinks the floating wrack  
Bespoke another world unknown to Black :  
But he, Agnostic, bound by what *he* knew,  
Ignored the tokens that *we* know are true,  
And his the self-same argument forsooth,  
Disproving God, that men accept as truth——

## THE ADVERSARY.

Vainly they strain at their cords  
Who are bound for the knife ;  
Idly they plead with their Lords  
For a leasing of life.  
A little more keeping of pleasure  
In trouble to end,  
A little more heaping of treasure  
For others to spend.  
Braggarts, uncertain of aim,  
Overshooting your goal,  
Fools who have won me a game,  
And have lost me a soul.  
Fallen the masks from your faces :—  
Home !—to your chest,  
Silent and dark be your places,  
, Senseless your rest.

## ERIC.

“ Silence and darkness,” nay ! but speech and light  
Through all my days, O friends, from this “ good night.”

THE CHIMES.

FIRST QUARTER.

L ORD, we raise our grateful numbers,  
(Softly while the city slumbers),  
Blest the want that Thou completest,  
Thou who man's shortcoming meetest.  
*Prayer of all God's gifts is sweetest.*

SECOND QUARTER.

Surely, since through Thy decreeing  
Increase comes and joy of being,  
Prayer is good, but best fulfilling :  
Man's the wishing, God's the willing.  
*Hush ! a warning voice is speaking :*  
*" Good the finding, best the seeking."*

THIRD QUARTER.

" Ten were cleansed, for one returning :"  
Wants supplied, forgot the yearning :  
Gates that open wide for wanting,  
Close to needle's eye by granting.  
*Gift there is, more craved for taking,*  
*Fast, the keener for the breaking,*  
*Thirst, the deeper for the slaking.*

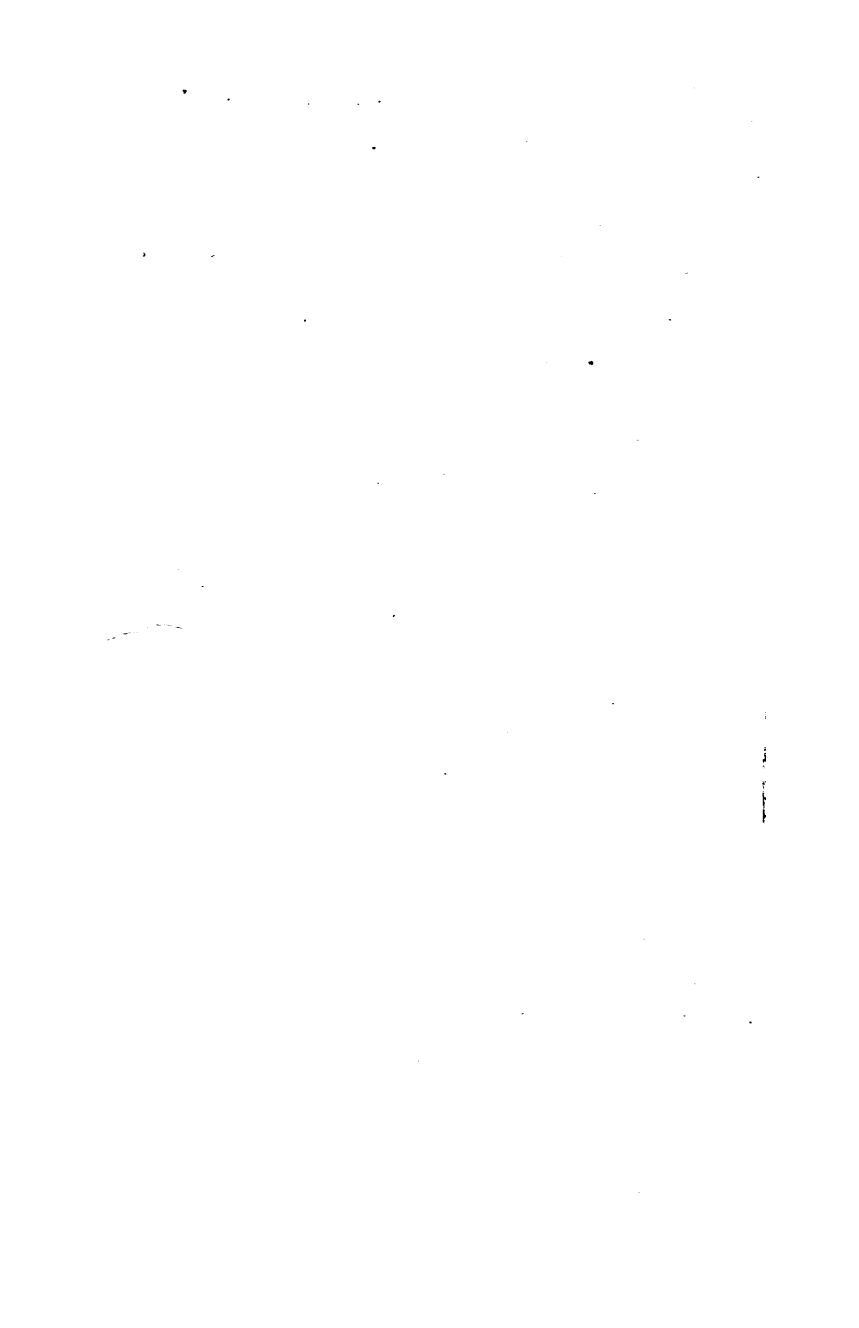
## FOURTH QUARTER.

Grant this thirst and hunger blessed,  
More desired the more possessed ;  
Christmas gift, God-present bringing :  
Morn will hear our joy-bells ringing.  
*Year by year ring in Thy birthday,  
Till Thy coming ends our Earth-day :  
Thine the thirst, and Thou the river,  
One for ever, Gift and Giver.*

## CLOCK STRIKES TWELVE.

FINIS.





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